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JOSÉ R. VALDEZ

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA *ex rel.*
JOSÉ R. VALDEZ,

Case No. CV11-03343 GAF (JCx)

Plaintiff.

V.

AVETA, INC.; MMM HEALTHCARE, INC.; PMC MEDICARE CHOICE, INC.; MSO OF PUERTO RICO, INC.; MMM HOLDINGS, INC.; and RICHARD SHINTO.

Defendants

**PLAINTIFF'S FIRST AMENDED
COMPLAINT PURSUANT TO THE
FEDERAL FALSE CLAIMS ACT, 31
U.S.C. §§ 3729-3732**

JURY TRIAL DEMANDED

Plaintiff José R. (“Josh”) Valdez (“Relator”), as qui tam relator on behalf United States of America, brings this action pursuant to 31 U.S.C. §§ 3729-3732 (the “False Claims

1 Act") to recover all damages, penalties and other remedies available to the United States
2 and Valdez under the False Claims Act, and in support thereof would show the following:
3

PARTIES

4 1. Plaintiff/Relator, José R. ("Josh") Valdez ("Valdez"), is a citizen of the United
5 States and a resident of the State of California.

6 2. Defendant AVETA INC. ("Aveta") is incorporated under the laws of the State
7 of Delaware, with its principal place of business in Fort Lee, New Jersey. During the
8 relevant time period, Aveta regularly transacted business in the Central District of
9 California through its own operations; through the activities of its President and Chief
10 Executive Officer, Richard Shinto ("Shinto"), who resides within this District; and through
11 the operations of its wholly owned subsidiary, North American Medical Management of
12 California, Inc. ("NAMM-California"), which was incorporated under the laws of
13 California and headquartered in Ontario, California.

14 3. Defendant MMM HEALTHCARE, INC. ("MMM") is a corporation
15 incorporated under the laws of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, with its principal place
16 of business in Puerto Rico. During the relevant time period, MMM regularly transacted
17 business in the Central District of California through the activities of its Chief Executive
18 Officer, Shinto, who resides within this District.

19 4. Defendant PMC MEDICARE CHOICE, INC. ("PMC") is a corporation
20 incorporated under the laws of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, with its principal place
21 of business in Puerto Rico. During the relevant time period, PMC regularly transacted
22 business in the Central District of California through the activities of its Chief Executive
23 Officer, Shinto, who resides within this District.

24 5. Defendant MSO OF PUERTO RICO, INC. ("MSO") is a corporation
25 organized under the laws of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, with its principal place of
26 business in Puerto Rico. During the relevant time period, MSO regularly transacted
27 business in the Central District of California through the activities of its Chief Executive
28 Officer, Shinto, who resides within this District.

1 6. Defendant MMM HOLDINGS, INC. (“MMM Holdings”) is a corporation
2 incorporated under the laws of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, with its principal place
3 of business in Puerto Rico. During the relevant time period, MMM Holdings regularly
4 transacted business in the Central District of California through the activities of its Chief
5 Executive Officer, Shinto, who resides within this District.

6 7. Defendant Richard Shinto (“Shinto”) is the President and Chief Executive
7 Officer of Defendant Aveta and the Chief Executive Officer of Defendants MMM, PMC,
8 and MSO. Shinto also has been the Chief Executive Officer of NAMM-California since
9 2003. Upon information and belief, Shinto at all times relevant has resided in this District.

10 8. Defendant MMM Holdings is a wholly owned subsidiary of Defendant Aveta
11 and is the parent holding company of Defendants MMM, PMC, and MSO. During the
12 relevant time period Aveta, MMM Holdings, MMM, PMC, and MSO were under the day-
13 to-day operational control of their CEO, Defendant Shinto, who reported to Aveta's Board
14 of Directors and the Board's Chairman, Defendant Daniel Straus. Defendants Aveta,
15 MMM Holdings, MMM, PMC, and MSO are collectively referred to as the Entity
16 Defendants. Valdez was the President for MSO from approximately April 1, 2010 until
17 December 13, 2010.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

19 9. Jurisdiction over this action properly lies in the U.S. District Court for the
20 Central District of California pursuant to the False Claims Act, 31 U.S.C. §§ 3730(b)(1)
21 and 3732(a), because Relator's claims seek remedies on behalf of the United States for
22 Defendants' multiple violations of 31 U.S.C. § 3729 and because during the relevant times
23 all Defendants regularly transacted business within this District through Shinto, and further
24 because Aveta regularly transacted business within this District through its own operations
25 and the operations of NAMM.

26 10. Venue is proper in the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California
27 pursuant to 31 U.S.C. §§ 3730(b)(1) and 3732(a) because one or more of the Defendants
28 ///

1 can be found, resides, or transacts business in this District, and because multiple of the acts
2 and omissions upon which this action is based occurred in this District.

3 **FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS**

4 **OVERVIEW**

5 11. This lawsuit concerns rampant fraud perpetrated by the Defendants against the
6 federal Medicare program (“Medicare”) since at least 2007 through the knowing
7 submission of inaccurate, incomplete, and untruthful data that the federal government used
8 to determine the amounts of money paid to MMM and PMC, and by failing to inform the
9 federal government that MMM and PMC had received overpayments as Defendants well
10 knew.

11 12. Beginning at least in January 2007 and continuing through **at least January**
12 **2012** (the “Relevant Period”), the Defendants knowingly overstated, and/or concealed and
13 failed to advise of and correct, their unsupported reports of ICD-9 codes, which caused
14 overstatements of risk adjustment scores used by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid
15 Services (“CMS”) for purposes of calculating the monthly government payments made to
16 Defendant Aveta’s two Medicare Advantage plans in Puerto Rico, Defendants MMM and
17 PMC (the “Plans”). By submitting unsupported, inaccurate or incomplete ICD-9 codes for
18 the Plans’ members (insureds), the Defendants caused CMS to assign higher multipliers –
19 known as risk adjustment factors (“RAF”) – to the Plans’ members that resulted in much
20 higher government payments than the Plans were entitled to receive.

21 13. In so doing, the Defendants knowingly presented or caused to be presented
22 inaccurate, incomplete, false, or fraudulent claims to CMS for payment or approval, and
23 knowingly made, used, or caused to be made or used false records or statements to CMS
24 for payment or approval of false claims. The resulting risk adjustment scores were inflated
25 because they were based on diagnosis codes that were not substantiated by the medical
26 records of the Medicare beneficiaries served by the Plans. In addition to submitting
27 diagnosis codes that were not substantiated by the medical records, Defendants failed to
28 delete or correct previously submitted diagnosis codes that internal audits , external, and

1 chart reviews revealed lacked adequate support in their corresponding medical charts. In
2 other words, in addition to knowingly submitting erroneous data (inflated diagnoses codes)
3 that they knew would result in higher RAFs and therefore higher capitated payments from
4 CMS, Defendants also failed to delete or correct inflated codes that they previously had
5 submitted because doing so would have resulted in lower RAFs and therefore lower
6 capitated payments from CMS. Lastly, Defendants failed to advise CMS that they had
7 received overpayments.

8 14. Defendants collected hundreds of millions of dollars per year in improperly
9 inflated payments from CMS based on the falsely inflated diagnoses codes they submitted
10 to CMS. After Defendants received these inflated payments, they conducted internal
11 accuracy reviews and audits that revealed the overpayments. Not only did Defendants fail
12 to advise CMS that they had received the overpayments, but, on information and belief,
13 they subsequently submitted false attestations that all risk adjustment date previously
14 submitted to CMS was “accurate, complete, and truthful.”

15 15. Throughout the eight months he served as President of Defendant MSO,
16 Valdez repeatedly questioned, and spoke out against the Defendants' overbilling practices
17 and other violations of law. On December 13, 2010, Defendants terminated Valdez's
18 employment, without cause or warning, in retaliation for his outspoken opposition to these
19 illegal practices. Defendants refused to pay him the severance he was due under his
20 employment agreement with MSO unless he signed an agreement releasing claims against
21 all Defendants and their affiliates and agreeing not to sue or make negative comments about
22 them, which Valdez refused to sign.

BACKGROUND

24 16. During the relevant time period, Aveta, which had more than \$2.3 billion in
25 annual revenues, was one of the largest providers of managed health-care services in the
26 United States. Aveta coordinated care for more than 230,000 Medicare beneficiaries and
27 more than 300,000 commercial members through its wholly owned subsidiaries in Puerto
28 Rico, California, and Illinois.

1 17. Two of Aveta's subsidiaries, Defendants MMM and PMC, operate Medicare
2 Advantage plans in Puerto Rico that serviced approximately 185,000 Medicare
3 beneficiaries as of November 2010. MMM is the larger of the two Plans with more than
4 140,000 members. Defendant MSO provides management and administrative support for
5 the Plans.

6 18. The Medicare Advantage Program allows private health plans, including
7 Defendants, to act as administrators for the U.S. Government in handling Medicare benefits.
8 A private health plan that acts in this capacity is known as a Medicare Advantage
9 Organization ("MAO"). Under Medicare Advantage, Medicare enrollees receive their
10 Medicare benefits from the MAO.

11 19. Each month, the government, through CMS, pays the MAO a monthly
12 payment based on applying a "risk adjustment factor" ("RAF") to a "capitated" amount for
13 each patient in the MAO. CMS arrives at the RAF for each patient in an MAO based on
14 "ICD-9" codes provided by the MAO for the previous year. ICD-9 codes are supposed to
15 correspond to the medical condition of a particular MAO's patient as reflected in the
16 appropriate medical record documentation for that patient. Generally speaking, the more
17 serious the patient's condition, the higher the payment value of the ICD-9 code associated
18 with that condition. CMS requires that the assignment of an ICD-9 Code must be based on
19 a face-to-face meeting between the medical provider and the patient.

20 20. The medical providers submit the ICD-9 codes to the MAOs. The MAOs in
21 turn submit them to CMS. MAOs can electronically submit ICD-9 codes to CMS as
22 frequently as daily in batches that contain large amounts of data relating to many enrollees.
23 MAOs are also able to electronically delete and correct previously submitted diagnosis
24 codes.

25 21. MAO's are required to submit accurate data to CMS. MAOs attest when
26 enrolling in the Medicare Advantage program that they will, to the best of their knowledge,
27 information, and belief, submit risk adjustment data that is accurate, complete, and truthful.
28 ///

1 Additionally, at least once a year, MAO's submit an Attestation of Risk Adjustment Data
2 form acknowledging that:

- 3 a. information submitted directly affects the calculation of CMS payments to the
4 MAO;
- 5 b. misrepresentation to CMS about the accuracy of such information may result
6 in federal civil action and/or criminal prosecution;
- 7 c. the MAO has reported to CMS for the relevant period all risk adjustment data
8 available to the MAO as of the date of the attestation; and,
- 9 d. based on best knowledge, information and belief, all information reported to
10 CMS is accurate, complete and truthful.

11 **FALSE CLAIMS ACT**

12 22. The False Claims Act (“FCA”) provides that any person or corporation that
13 knowingly submits or causes to be submitted a false or fraudulent claim to the United States
14 for payment or approval, or who makes or causes to be made a false statement or record in
15 connection with such a claim, is liable to the federal government. The FCA, in conjunction
16 with other laws, also makes liable any person or corporation that knowingly conceals or
17 improperly avoids or decreases an obligation to pay or transmit money or property to the
18 Government. An “obligation to pay” includes a duty to pay the government arising “from
19 the retention of any overpayment.” 31 U.S.C. § 3729(b)(3). A person acts “knowingly”
20 with respect to information if he has actual knowledge of the information, or if he acts in
21 deliberate ignorance of, or in reckless disregard of, the truth or falsity of the information.
22 31 U.S.C. § 3729(b)(1)(A).

23 23. The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (“ACA”) imposes a 60-day
24 deadline for companies to refund overpayments of Medicare and Medicaid funds.
25 Specifically, section 6402(a) of the ACA, codified at section 1128J of the Social Security
26 Act (“SSA”), requires companies to report and return Medicare or Medicaid overpayments
27 by the later of (1) 60 days after the overpayment has been identified, or (2) the date any
28 corresponding cost report is due. 42 U.S.C. § 1320a–7k(d)(2). Any overpayment retained

beyond that deadline constitutes an “obligation” that gives rise to FCA liability. FCA § 3729(b)(3); SSA § 1128J(d)(3). Moreover, section 6402(a) applies to Medicare Advantage organizations such as Defendants. SSA § 1128J(d)(4)(C).

4 24. The FCA also prohibits a person or entity from retaliating against someone
5 who speaks out against that person or entity's fraud against the government. 31 U.S.C.
6 § 3730(h).

7 25. A Defendant that violates the FCA is liable to the federal government for a
8 civil penalty of not less than \$5,500 and not more than \$11,000 for each such claim, plus
9 three (3) times the amount of damages sustained by the government because of the false
10 claim or statement. A Defendant who retaliates against the whistleblower is liable to the
11 whistleblower for double back pay, interest, special damages sustained as a result of
12 retaliation, and attorneys' fees and costs

DEFENDANTS' WRONGDOING

14 26. CMS paid the Plans approximately \$1.5 billion in 2008 and approximately
15 \$1.8 billion in 2009 and 2010, respectively. Valdez is informed and believes that CMS paid
16 the Plans a total of no less than \$1 billion in 2007.

17 27. Throughout the Relevant Period, the Defendants sought to falsely inflate the
18 RAFs assigned by CMS to Plan members by submitting ICD-9 codes to CMS that were not
19 supported by the underlying medical records or conditions of Plan members and by failing
20 to correct and/or delete previously submitted diagnosis codes after Defendants learned that
21 they were not supported by the corresponding medical records.

22 28. The Defendants' submissions of unsupported diagnosis codes to CMS, in
23 addition to their knowing concealment and failure to correct such data, damaged the United
24 States by causing it to pay hundreds of millions of dollars more to the Plans during the
25 Relevant Period than they were entitled to receive.

26 29. During Valdez's tenure with Defendants, in numerous internal meetings of the
27 Defendants' senior executives, they estimated that the Plans' potential liability to CMS
28 ranged between \$300 million and \$350 million per year from 2007 to 2010.

1 30. The ICD-9 codes Defendants submitted to CMS were based on the ICD-9
2 codes contained in Medical Status Visit (“MSV”) forms purportedly generated by the Plans’
3 medical providers and submitted to the Plans by the providers in connection with each
4 member visit to the provider. CMS calculated the RAF for each member based on the ICD-
5 9s submitted by the Plans for that member for the prior year.

6 31. In a Spanish-language newsletter to providers that is undated but appears to
7 have been circulated in mid-2008, the Plans described MSV forms as the primary means of
8 gathering “crucial patient information” that “allows for the identification of high risk
9 members and the creation of specialized programs through the identification of areas of
10 opportunity. Another added benefit is the maximization of the RAF (Risk Adjustment
11 Factor) of the member.”¹ The same message to providers was displayed on MMM’s website
12 as recently as late March 2011.

13 32. Each time the Plans submitted diagnosis codes to CMS, CMS could not verify
14 the codes’ accuracy because CMS did not require the Plans to submit supporting
15 documentation with the codes. Instead, CMS relied on the Plans to submit medically
16 supported diagnoses in the first instance and to delete and/or correct any diagnose codes
17 that the Plans later determined were unsupported by the underlying MSV’s and records..

18 33. The Plans’ contracts with many of their medical providers created incentives
19 for the providers to inflate the ICD-9 codes that they recorded for Plan members.
20 Throughout the Relevant Period, certain Plan providers that were organized as Independent
21 Practice Associations (“IPAs”) maintained profit-sharing arrangements with the Plans
22 pursuant to which each IPA received 50% to 60% of the “surplus” (*i.e.*, profit) earned by
23 the Plans on that IPA’s member services. For 2009, Defendants paid IPAs \$83.2 million in
24 “surplus” payments. Despite this built-in incentive for IPAs to inflate diagnosis codes, the
25 Defendants knowingly failed to take corrective measures to delete or filter out inaccurate

26

27 ¹ The reason that high RAFs benefit providers is that the Plans had a profit sharing
28 arrangement with many of its providers. Thus, higher RAFs meant higher profits for the
providers.

1 risk adjustment data initially submitted to CMS or to otherwise ensure the integrity of the
2 data initially submitted to CMS. Quite the opposite, Defendant actively encouraged
3 providers to inflate diagnosis codes. Defendants also knowingly failed to correct the risk
4 adjustment data previously submitted to CMS after learning that the data was not supported
5 by the corresponding medical charts.

6 34. Valdez was hired on April 1, 2010, as President of MSO. Between April 1 and
7 April 16, 2010, Valdez received training in Ontario, California, focusing on the business
8 operations of NAMM-California, Aveta's subsidiary in California. During the training, a
9 NAMM employee asked Valdez whether he was aware of the "MSV issue" in Puerto Rico.
10 Valdez said he was not, and his efforts to learn about the issue at that time were
11 unsuccessful.

12 35. Shortly after he reported for work at MSO's Puerto Rico headquarters on April
13 19, 2010, Valdez discovered that the "MSV issue" referred to by the employee was the
14 Defendants' practice of overcharging CMS based on the submission of and failure to correct
15 unsupported diagnosis codes (codes not supported by the corresponding medical record).
16 Defendants knew that a significant percentage of the MSV forms in their insureds' files did
17 not support the ICD-9 codes submitted to CMS and used to calculate the RAF scores.
18 Defendants' knowledge of this fact, and matters attendant to it, were a constant area of focus
19 for the entirety of Valdez's tenure at MSO. After only 8 months at MSO, Valdez was
20 terminated in December 2010 by Richard Shinto, the Chief Executive Officer of all five
21 Entity Defendants, for continuing to question Defendants' inappropriate practices.

22 36. In addition to over-charging and failing to notify CMS they had received
23 overpayments, Defendants committed other wrongdoing to retain these funds by (a) not
24 paying fee for service doctors Medicare fee increases in 2010, (b) not paying out-of-plan
25 doctors for emergency related services (referred to in the industry as Non-Par Payments),
26 and (c) retaliating against providers for providing expensive medical care. Valdez was fired
27 for also complaining to Defendants about these additional areas of wrongdoing.

28 ///

1 37. Upon beginning work for Defendants in April 2010, Valdez was provided an
2 MMM 2010 Business Plan. Among the identified goals for 2010 were to ensure RAF and
3 MSV accuracy, using internal and external audits to assess their accuracy. Another goal
4 was to “Effectively Manage Health Care Cost and Quality” by reducing the length of “bed
5 days” of members, decreasing ER visits in acute hospitals by 10 percent, and decreasing
6 ambulatory services by 10 percent. On April 23, 2010, Valdez attended a Finance Meeting
7 with Defendants’ senior executives. The April 23, 2010 Finance Meeting included a
8 directive to reduce the number of referrals to fee-for-service specialists in the areas of
9 cardiology, ophthalmology, pulmonology, orthopedics, and gastroenterology.²

10 38. Another agenda item for the April 23 meeting was providing for a “possible
11 CMS RAF Audit.”

12 39. At the conclusion of the April 23 Finance Meeting, MSO determined to
13 incorporate changes to Defendants’ compensation agreements with IPAs to more closely
14 tie IPAs’ compensation to Defendants’ profitability, and to provide for recoveries from the
15 IPAs should Defendants have to repay funds to CMS caused by a failure by the IPA’s
16 records to adequately support the IDC-9 codes.

17 40. The initiative referenced as part of the April 23 meeting included the reviews
18 and audits of the medical charts of hundreds of thousands of files corresponding to diagnosis
19 codes Defendants had already submitted to CMS (the “Chart Review Initiative”). These
20 reviews and audits were done both by Defendants’ internal Coding Unit and by a third party
21 vendor called The Coding Source. After receiving the results of these reviews and audits,
22 Defendants cherry-picked those medical visits they believed supported higher billing codes,
23 while ignoring the charts that corresponded to unsupported and inaccurate codes that should

24 _____
25 ² At the same time Defendants sought to get more funds from CMS, Defendants sought to
26 keep more of the CMS funds by reducing the number of referrals to specialists. Under the
27 Medicare Advantage program, Defendants are expected to pay for all medical care for
28 enrollees, including those needing services of medical specialists who were not covered by
Defendants’ capitated payment agreements with their PCPs (Primary Care Physicians). Thus,
when a PCP referred an enrollee to a specialist, Defendants incurred the additional
expense of paying the specialist.

1 have not been reported or should have been lower than reported to CMS. Defendants
2 thereafter resubmitted corrected or additional codes for the cherry-picked charts to CMS
3 for additional compensation. Despite their obligation to be “accurate, complete, and
4 truthful” with CMS, Defendants did not correct or inform CMS of previously submitted
5 codes that were inaccurate, invalid, and unsupported by medical records and which had
6 resulted or would result in overpayments by CMS.

7 41. Defendants carefully monitored the results of the Chart Review Initiative.
8 They tracked the reviews and audits in a “Coding Unit Monthly Report” (the “Monthly
9 Report”), which provided significant detail about the ongoing efforts for the year to collect
10 and review medical files, MSVs, and ICD-9s, as well as the financial impact of resubmitting
11 data to CMS. The Monthly Review was revised with additional data throughout the year
12 and provided to Defendants’ senior executives, including Defendant Shinto.

13 42. The first part of the Monthly Report detailed “Compliance & Productivity” in
14 several areas, including:

- 15 a. Progress of The Coding Source in conducting retroactive review of
16 140,000 calendar-year 2009 plan member charts and identifying “New
17 Comp Codes” that could be submitted to CMS for additional payment.
- 18 b. Progress of Defendants’ internal review and audit of 182,402 calendar-
19 year 2010 MSVs.
- 20 c. Progress towards Defendants’ goal in 2010 of performing in-house
21 approximately 2,000 audits of calendar-year 2009 ICD-9’s in order “to
22 assure providers assessment documentation,” as well as the Coding
23 Source’s retrospective medical chart review of 1,700 calendar-year
24 2009 plan member charts.
- 25 d. The Compliance & Productivity section of the Monthly Reports made
26 clear to Defendants that very high percentages of the ICD-9 Codes they
27 sent to CMS were non-compliant.

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1 43. The second part of the Monthly Report contained information that told
2 Defendants the “Financial Impact” of the Chart Review Initiative. In it, Defendants did the
3 following:

- 4 a. Defendants kept track of actual and estimated additional revenue
5 received and/or to be received from CMS by resubmitting changed and
6 supplemental ICD-9 codes to CMS,
- 7 b. This section also kept track of the cost of doing the Chart Review
8 Initiative, setting forth how much Defendants had to pay The Coding
9 Source and the expenses related to internal employees doing the
10 initiative.
- 11 c. The Financial Impact section reported Defendants’ average RAF scores
12 for each month, as calculated by CMS, as well as based on a general
13 software program called MDX. The RAF that Defendants caused CMS
14 to use was routinely 20 percent or so higher than the MDX calculation.
- 15 d. The “Financial Impact” section of the Monthly Report contained only
16 entries and columns that kept track of “Revenue” to be earned from the
17 Chart Review Initiative. Despite referencing that the reviews were to
18 assure accuracy, Defendants did not keep track of the financial impact
19 that would have resulted from non-compliant codes already sent to and
20 used by CMS to increase RAF scores (and hence increase payments to
21 Defendants). Defendants intended to have their cake and eat it too –
22 keep funds previously received as overpayments from CMS and have
23 CMS pay them additional money for charts they could now up-code to
24 increase RAF scores.

25 44. The 60 day rule discussed previously, within which recipients of federal funds
26 had to advise the government that they had received overpayment from the government,
27 was enacted by Congress in March, 2010, Defendants were well aware of this new law. On
28 April 29, 2010, Defendants’ senior executives were sent an email entitled “Health Care

1 Reform: Law Imposes Requirement to Report and Return Medicare and Medicaid
2 Overpayments Within 60 Days."

3 45. This new law created significant consternation among Defendants' senior
4 executives. In particular, they were concerned that the new law might lead to an increase
5 in the number of audits by CMS. In the months following the dissemination of the new
6 law, Defendants' senior executives met to discuss the Plans' exposure in the event of a CMS
7 Risk Adjustment Data Validation Audit ("RADV") of the Plans for the previous years.
8 They agreed to develop a strategy for dealing with the liability that would result if a CMS
9 audit exposed the hundreds of millions of dollars in overpayments to Defendants.

10 46. In May 2010, Shinto informed Valdez that an internal audit of MSV forms had
11 discovered a substantial discrepancy between the ICD-9 codes reported to CMS and the
12 underlying medical records maintained by Plan providers. Shinto stated that only 33
13 percent of the audited MSV forms were accurate, while the other 67 percent lacked adequate
14 support in the medical records.

15 47. In May and June 2010, Defendants' senior executives exchanged numerous
16 emails relating to MSV and RAF concerns and scenarios.

17 48. On June 2, 2010, Defendants' senior executives met to further address MSV
18 and RAF strategies. Among the items covered at the meeting were:

- 19 a. Defendants' intent to have 100 percent MSV form review;
- 20 b. Defendants' concern that "MSV forms have yielded compliance of less
21 than 50%";
- 22 c. Defendants' continuing audits, both internally and through outside
23 vendor The Coding Source, to assess RAF;
- 24 d. the concern that the quality of RAF scores was low, with some reviews
25 indicating only 33 percent of files supported the scores;
- 26 e. Defendants' concerns that CMS would penalize Defendants if it knew
27 the true facts;
- 28 f. Defendants' desire to pass on any financial penalties for overpayment

to the IPAs and how to accomplish that;

g. Creating a RAF Reserve sufficient to cover the liability that could result from a CMS audit; and

h. the decision that “audit information will be reported to senior management and the board.”

49. On July 1, 2010, Defendants' senior executives met to further discuss the previous suggestion to create an RAF Reserve to have funds available in the event of a CMS audit. Penelope Kokkinides, Aveta's Chief Operating Officer, stated that an aggressive RAF strategy remained the key to maximizing payments from the government, but that the Plans had inflated RAFs, which were resulting in substantial overcharges to the government based on diagnosis codes that were not supported by the underlying medical records.

50. Kokkinides stated at the meeting that the majority of the files were non-compliant and that as many as 97 percent of the Plans' providers could be non-compliant with CMS standards. She stated that the Defendants would be "screwed" if CMS audited the Plans, particularly if such an audit reached back to 2007 because Plan overcharges to CMS were particularly egregious that year. She also noted that 2009 was a risky year. Kokkinides stated that the Plans' exposure to the federal government could be as high as 20 percent of total revenue, which she stated was approximately \$350 million per year. The executives expressed the desire to pass on to the IPAs their portions of the repayments to CMS should there be an audit (because the Plans paid the IPAs 50 to 60 percent of the Plans' profits attributable to the IPAs). The executives resolved that provision for this would be done by withholding funds from future "surplus" payments to the IPAs and putting them in a reserve fund.

51. On July 1 or 8, 2010, Valdez attended a senior management meeting addressing various financial issues, including continuing concerns that Defendants could have to pay significant money to CMS because of RAF and MSV issues. Management noted at this meeting that The Coding Source was doing work for Defendants relative to RAF issues.

1 52. On July 9, 2010, Valdez met with Rick Shinto, who said in response to
2 Valdez's questions that David Silva could explain why RAF scores were inflated. Despite
3 several attempts by Valdez to schedule a meeting, Silva would not meet with Valdez.
4 Silva's title was Coding Director for MMM Holdings, and it appears that he played a
5 significant role in preparing the Monthly Reports.

6 53. On July 23, 2010, Penelope Kokkinides circulated an updated Monthly Report
7 to senior management, advising them of the current status of the Chart Review Initiative.
8 The Monthly Reports made clear to executives that very high percentages of Defendants'
9 ICD-9 codes submitted to CMS were non-compliant.

10 54. In July 2010, Defendants' senior executives exchanged numerous emails about
11 RADV audits and holdbacks from IPAs.

12 55. On July 22, 2010, Defendants held a senior executive management meeting to
13 discuss, among other things, concerns about a possible risk score audit by CMS.

14 56. In a meeting in late July 2010, Defendants' senior executives decided to
15 withhold \$21 million per quarter from future surplus payments made to the IPAs under their
16 profit-sharing arrangements with the Plans, and to place those funds in the RAF Reserve.
17 Under this plan, the IPAs would contribute \$84 million per year – which approximated their
18 entire share of the surplus for 2009 – to the RAF Reserve. It was decided not to seek
19 disgorgement of previous surplus payments made to the IPAs for fear that such a request
20 would cause providers to leave the Plans.

21 57. In a July 30, 2010 email exchange following up on the decision to withhold
22 from future surplus payments to IPAs, Rick Shinto directed that a meeting be held with
23 "key people . . . to script our story so that we will not create confusion." Shinto cautioned
24 that they "not stress how much we have paid out over the 3 years or we will have more
25 problems," and that they "not go through the detail of financial exposure or we may have a
26 lot of chismses."

27 58. On August 3, 2010, MSO AVP of Finance David Maldonado circulated an
28 email summarizing information for calendar years 2007 and 2008 comparing amounts of

1 “RADV exposure” to the “surplus” amounts Defendants had paid IPAs. For 2007,
2 Maldonado summarized that “[b]ased on the RADV analysis, there is an exposure of
3 \$28.5MM for that year (out of the total of \$103MM).” Maldonado further summarized that
4 for 2008 “[b]ased on the RADV analysis, there is an exposure of \$29MM . . . out of the
5 total of \$103MM.” He suggested that because those calendar years “have been already
6 reconciled/closed,” Defendants only seek retention of surplus payments from IPA for the
7 years 2009 and 2010.

8 59. On August 4, 2010, executives of Defendants held multiple discussions to
9 address the particulars of the plan to withhold payments to IPAs to create a reserve to pay
10 CMS if needed. They also addressed what to say to the IPAs about the plan for reserves,
11 which would include the need to have a reserve in case of a CMS audit, and the view that
12 the reserve funds should come from RAF dollars. Doug Malton, Chief Financial Officer of
13 Aveta, told Valdez and others that the Plans should reserve \$27 million from the next
14 quarterly profit-sharing payment to the IPAs and \$5 million per quarter thereafter. While
15 the IPAs’ proportional share of the surplus resulting from improperly obtained CMS
16 payments was significantly higher, Defendants’ senior executives were still concerned that
17 IPAs might defect to competing plans if asked to pay more into the RAF Reserve.

18 60. During this same discussion, the issue of Defendants not wanting to pay fee
19 for service doctors the newly increased Medicare rates was again addressed. Valdez
20 indicated his view that the rates should be paid.

21 61. In early August 2010, the IPAs were informed during a meeting of the MSO
22 Advisory Board of the decision to withhold IPA payments to create a reserve. Carlos
23 Vivaldi, Chief Financial Officer of MMM Holdings, told the IPAs that the inflated RAFs
24 submitted to CMS had resulted in approximately \$300 million per year in unsubstantiated
25 payments to the Plans. He stated that a portion of future profit-sharing payments to IPAs
26 would have to be withheld to fund the RAF Reserve, in order to have funds available should
27 CMS perform an audit. He advised the group that CMS could go back in time up to three
28 years as part of an audit.

1 62. Throughout August 2010, Defendants' senior executives exchanged emails
2 addressing analysis of the surplus from 2007 to 2009, about the IPA holdback proposal, and
3 about RAF comparisons.

4 63. On August 20, Valdez attended a meeting where Defendants' senior executives
5 discussed, among other things, that The Coding Source had been improperly coding patients
6 that need at-home care.

7 64. On August 31, 2010, Valdez attended a Medical Management meeting.
8 During the meeting, participants acknowledged that Defendants' MSV process was
9 inaccurate. Penelope Kokkinides was adamant that Defendants should continue their
10 current MSV practice. Valdez voiced his opposition to continuing this inaccurate process.

11 65. Defendants' strategy of seeking and keeping overly high payments from CMS
12 while paying less and withholding funds from providers created tension between
13 Defendants and the IPAs. For example, Defendants were "facing a situation with IPA's"
14 because "a higher RAF was expected" by IPAs in 2010 based on coding and RAF scores
15 submitted to CMS in 2009; but in fact Defendants reported to IPAs a lower RAF for Q1
16 2010, resulting in lower payments by Defendants to the IPAs. At the same time that the
17 Defendants were requiring the IPAs to contribute millions of dollars to the RAF Reserve,
18 they were telling the IPAs that the Defendants would contribute substantially more to the
19 Reserve than the IPAs. In fact, Defendants contributed little or nothing to the Reserve.

20 66. In early September 2010, another Monthly Report (updated Coding Unit
21 Dashboard) was distributed to Defendants' senior executives. This Monthly Report added
22 to the previously reported 2010 month-by-month information by updating the report in
23 certain areas.

24 67. The Compliance & Productivity section of the September Monthly Report
25 indicated, among other things:

26 a. that through the end of June, Defendants' Coding Unit had reviewed
27 4,921 obsolete ICD-9s used in calendar year 2009 submissions to CMS
28 and came up with 3,224 New Compliance Codes to resubmit to CMS;

1 b. that through sometime in July, The Coding Source had performed
2 93,167 retrospective reviews of member charts relative to calendar year
3 2009 submissions to CMS and came up with 191,463 New Compliance
4 Codes to resubmit to CMS;

5 c. that in July and August, Defendants' internal staff had audited 516
6 calendar-year 2009 MSV member files and found them to have a
7 "Compliance Rate" of 58 percent.

8 i. Based on that, the non-compliance rate would be the remainder,
9 or 42 percent.

10 ii. The diagnosis codes for these non-compliant files should have
11 been withdrawn from CMS. Had they been withdrawn, CMS
12 payments to defendants would have been lower.

13 d. that between March and June, The Coding Source had conducted
14 retrospective review of 467 calendar year 2009 medical charts and found
15 a "Compliance Rate" of 31 percent.

16 i. Based on that, the non-compliance rate would be the remainder,
17 or 69 percent.

18 ii. The diagnosis codes for these non-compliant files should have
19 been withdrawn from CMS. Had they been withdrawn, CMS
20 payments to defendants would have been lower.

21 e. that in June and July, Defendants internal staff had audited 1,359
22 calendar year 2010 MSV's for compliance and found that 308 of those
23 were in compliance, but that 1051 were "Sends Back," which on
24 information and belief meant they had to be returned to IPA's because
25 the MSV's did not support the codes and billing factors represented.

26 68. The Financial Impact section of the September Monthly Report indicated,
27 among other things, that:

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- 1 a. Auditing in January, February, and March by Defendants of calendar
2 year 2010 codes resulted in assuring that “progress notes accomplish
3 with the documentation required” to support the use of high paying
4 critical care codes, and that this auditing resulted in additional revenue
5 to Defendants of \$516,896.11;
- 6 b. Estimates for January through March by Defendants’ internal staff of
7 the number of ICD-9s that Defendants could resubmit to CMV after
8 using different ICD-9 codes would result in additional revenue to
9 Defendants of \$1,401,273.89;
- 10 c.. that The Coding Source’s February through partial July retrospective
11 reviews of 2009 calendar year member charts and recommended New
12 Comp Codes would result in \$15,000,000 in additional revenue once
13 those new comp codes were submitted to CMS; and
- 14 d. that CMS’s RAFs for Defendants for the months January through
15 August were consistently 20 percent or more higher than “MDX” risk
16 adjustment scores for Defendants. For example, for the month of
17 August, MMM and PMC’s average RAF with CMS was 1.29, whereas
18 their average for the same time period under MDX was 1.01.

19 69. Despite ongoing knowledge that they received hundreds of millions in
20 overpayments from CMS, Defendants did not inform CMS that they had received
21 overpayments. This failure to advise CMS not only was a material falsehood when the
22 cherry picked codes were submitted, but also rendered false Defendants’ “Attestation of
23 Risk Adjustment Data” forms for the relevant time periods.

24 70. Instead of notifying CMS of these overpayments, Defendants continued the
25 Chart Review Initiative and making doctors’ compensation more closely tied to
26 Defendants’ profitability. For example, in a September 8, 2010 email, Penelope Kokkinides
27 provided Rick Shinto a list of highlights that he could report to the Aveta Board of Directors.
28 Her highlights tracked many of the “to do” items Defendants indicated during the April 23,

1 2010 meeting previously discussed. Her highlights included: the initiation of additional
2 RAF “enhancement strategies”; a comprehensive compliance program developed for RAF-
3 MSV reviews; 100 percent MSV compliance reviews; a restructuring of the MSV program;
4 and changing the way physicians are reimbursed. She also noted they had addressed the
5 issue of “CMS Audit.”

6 71. During a telephonic CEO conference on September 8, 2010, Shinto indicated
7 his desire to change the language Defendants used in physician contracts to emphasize that
8 Defendants could seek recovery from doctors in the event of an RAF audit.

9 72. In September 2010, Defendants’ senior executives circulated an “Audit
10 Report” that, among other things, noted Defendant’s contractual requirement that IPA’s
11 have face-to-face “encounters” with 40% of their respective patients every month. This
12 contractual requirement bore no relationship to whether a medical need existed to see that
13 percentage of patients but was intended to generate additional medical diagnosis codes in
14 light of CMS’s requirement of face-to-face visits.

15 73. During a September 9, 2010 Senior Management Meeting attended by, among
16 others, Rick Shinto, Valdez expressed his concern that the company was not adequately
17 policing fraud, waste, and abuse issues. Valdez was told by those present to keep quiet and
18 that everything was fine.

19 74. On October 1, 2010, Senior Management held a meeting in which they
20 discussed, among other things, compliance rate problems related to their methodology in
21 gathering MSVs.

22 75. In October 2010, as part of his concern about RAF overcharges to CMS,
23 Valdez recommended that Defendants create an MSV Compliance Department. To
24 Valdez’s knowledge, this suggestion was not followed and no such compliance department
25 was created.

26 76. On October 27, 2010, during an MSO Senior Management meeting Montalvo-
27 Orsini noted that RAF scores resulted in 20 to 25 percent of total revenue, that that the
28 //

1 information to support the RAFs was not always in the medical charts, and that this was a
2 big problem.

3 77. In late October, senior management reviewed a Project Plan addressing the
4 status of various tasks, including the “RAF Initiative” and the “CMS RAF Take Back
5 Exposure,” noting regarding the last task that the “hold back implemented at the IPA level.”

6 78. On October 28, 2010, Valdez spoke with Shinto about continuing concerns
7 that Defendants were overcharging CMS and underpaying fee for service doctors. Shinto
8 indicated that Valdez should stop making such suggestions, saying that Valdez was a
9 “Gringo sent down to work in Puerto Rico to protect Aveta,” and should not be looking to
10 protect CMS or the Island’s doctors.

11 79. In early November 2010, Orlando Gonzalez prepared a presentation for Rick
12 Shinto to give to Aveta Chairman Daniel Straus. As part of that presentation, Gonzalez and
13 Shinto confirmed that as part of “2010 MMM/PMC Quality” The Coding Source conducted
14 140,000 retrospective chart reviews for 2009 and that Defendants’ internal staff audited
15 72,000 calendar year 2010 MSVs.

16 80. Defendants continued to debate the issue of how much to withhold from
17 surplus distributions to IPAs, as they continued to weigh the likelihood of a CMS audit. For
18 example, in a November 2010 email exchange, David Maldonado recognized that
19 Defendants needed to continue to withhold surplus distributions from IPAs to have funds
20 in the event of a CMS audit, but recommended that no withholding occur in the last quarter
21 of the year because that is an “open enrollment” quarter when Defendants were relying on
22 IPAs to increase Defendants patient membership. “[A]s this surplus payment is the only
23 one made during the open enrollment, we think that is a great business opportunity to
24 increase the membership volume through our business commitment with the [IPAs] and
25 specialists.” Maldonado suggested for that quarter only that Defendants reduce, or abandon
26 altogether, the holdback and pay the IPAs a much higher amount of money. “[W]e
27 recommend not to withhold from this surplus distribution the RADV reserve. However, we
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1 will doing [sic] this withhold in the future surplus distributions (February, May and
2 August)."

3 81. In November 2010, Shinto further directed his subordinates to stop making
4 federally required payments to non-Plan providers for such services as emergency room
5 treatment. Valdez had indicated on several prior occasions that the law required such
6 payments to be made.

7 82. On November 12, 2010, Valdez again told Richard Shinto that he needed to
8 get more information about the RAF inflation issue.

9 83. On November 16, 2012, during a meeting of Defendants' senior executives,
10 Valdez again complained about Defendants' limited fraud and abuse prevention practices.

11 84. On December 9, 2010, Kokkinides circulated another Monthly Report (Coding
12 Unit Dashboard) that added additional information as of approximately December 6, 2010.
13 This Monthly Report showed how much additional revenue Defendants expected to receive
14 through the Chart Review Initiative for the year 2010.

15 85. The Compliance & Productivity section of the December Monthly Report
16 indicated, among other things:

- 17 a. that through the end of November, the Coding Source had performed
18 143,072 retrospective reviews of member charts relative to calendar-
19 year 2009 submissions to CMS and came up with approximately
20 191,463 New Compliance Codes to submit to CMS;
- 21 b. that in September, Defendants' internal staff audited an additional 159
22 calendar-year 2009 MSV member files and found those files to have a
23 "Compliance Rate" of 67 percent;
 - 24 i. Based on that, the non-compliance rate would be the remainder,
25 or 33 percent.
 - 26 ii. The diagnosis codes for these non-compliant files should have
27 been withdrawn from CMS. Had they been withdrawn, CMS's
28 payments to defendants would have been lower.

1 c. that in July, the Coding Source conducted retrospective review of 144
2 additional calendar year 2009 medical charts and found a “Compliance
3 Rate” for that month of 43 percent;
4 i. Based on that, the non-compliance rate would be the remainder,
5 or 57 percent.
6 ii. The diagnosis codes for these non-compliant files should have
7 been withdrawn from CMS. Had they been withdrawn, CMS’
8 payments to defendants would’ve been lower.
9 d. that through a portion of December, Defendants’ internal staff had
10 audited a total of 108,564 calendar year 2010 MSVs for compliance and
11 found:
12 i. A Compliance Rate of 60 percent;
13 ii. “MSV’s approve amount YTD” was 64,682;
14 iii. “MSV’s rejected amount YTD” was 43,882;
15 iv. Based on this information, the 43,882 “rejected” after audit MSVs
16 represent a non-compliant 40 percent of the files audited.

17 86. The Financial Impact section of the December Monthly Report carries forward
18 additional information covering the remaining months of the 2010 calendar year and gives
19 expected totals for the year. It relates that:

20 a. for the year, Defendants retrospective reviews of files would result in an
21 additional \$183,713,582 from CMS;
22 b. Defendants incurred \$4,343,270 in costs to undertake the retrospective
23 reviews;
24 c. Defendants will net approximately \$179,370,311.48 in additional
25 revenue based on the submissions to CMS;
26 d. the RAF scores Defendants caused CMS to use in paying Defendants
27 remained high, noting that for September the CMS score for
28 MMM/PMS was 1.28, while the MDX score was only 1.06; and for

October the CMS average was 1.30, while the MDX average was 1.08; and

e. as with previous reports, the Financial Impact section only lists areas where revenues to Defendants could be raised, and did not track or identify areas where Defendants had received overpayments from CMS.

87. In December 2010, Aveta announced that it was increasing its loan facilities by \$100 million and using the entire proceeds to pay a dividend to Aveta shareholders. Valdez objected to paying the dividend while the Defendants' potential liability to the government for RAF overcharges remained unaddressed.

88. As noted above Defendants were keenly aware of their RAF scores, carefully tracking them as part of continuing efforts to get higher and higher scores and the elevated CMS funds that come with them. They not only tracked them in the Monthly Report, but did so in other documents as well. They repeatedly saw in their own records that the Plans' RAFs during the Relevant Period were substantially higher than those of other Medicare Advantage plans serving demographically and diagnostically similar populations in Puerto Rico, in addition to comparable Medicare Advantage plans nationwide. In 2009, for example, Defendants' average RAF was 1.39 according to Defendants' actuarial financial statements, while the RAF for MCS Advantage, a competing Medicare Advantage plan in Puerto Rico whose members had similar demographic and diagnostic characteristics, was approximately 1.10.

89. CMS published reports showing the average RAF scores of MAOs nationwide for the years 2006 through 2012. CMS's listed RAF scores for MMM and PMC reflect that they were substantially higher than any other MAO in Puerto Rico for the years 2006 through 2012.

90. Not only were Defendants' RAFs significantly higher than other plans in Puerto Rico, but they were higher than even Defendants had budgeted, with an average budgeted RAF of 1.25 for 2009, as opposed to the 1.39 actual RAF.

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1 91. Defendants scheme to obtain and keep inflated CMS Medicare Advantage
2 funds was very profitable. For example, for the year 2009 (according to a Finance Meeting
3 Report updated April 23, 2010), before paying IPAs their “surplus distribution,”
4 Defendants’ gross margin for Puerto Rico was about \$391,779,890. After paying IPAs
5 \$64,738,152 million for their role in Defendants’ profiteering, Defendants’ net margin was
6 \$327,041,378. However, these figures do not account for the additional revenue obtained
7 by Defendants through their Chart Review Initiative.

8 92. On December 13, 2010, less than one week after the dividend was announced,
9 Shinto terminated Valdez’s employment without cause or warning.

10 93. Throughout Valdez’s eight months as MSO President, Defendants gave no
11 indication that they would delete or correct the inflated risk adjustment data submitted to
12 CMS, either prospectively or retrospectively. Nor did the Defendants give any indication
13 that they would notify CMS of the fact of overpayment or return any improperly obtained
14 funds to the government.

15 94. Subsequent to Valdez’s termination, Defendants Aveta and MSO refused to
16 pay him the severance to which he was entitled under his employment agreement with MSO
17 unless he signed a general release of claims against the Defendants and their affiliates,
18 agreed not to sue Defendants or their affiliates, and agreed not to make any negative
19 comments about them or their business operations. Valdez did not sign the release, and
20 Defendants have not paid him the severance due under the employment agreement.

21 95. In a meeting on January 18, 2011, Alba Munoz, the former AVP of Health
22 Care Quality for the Plans and the person at Defendants in charge of the MSV accuracy
23 audits, confirmed to Valdez that Defendants’ MSV accuracy audits revealed that about 20
24 percent of Defendants \$2 billion in Medicare revenue was unsupported.

25 96. In a meeting on January 20, 2011, during a discussion about MMM and PMC
26 inflating RAF scores, Alba Munoz told Mr. Valdez that a CMS RADV audit is her “biggest
27 nightmare.”

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1 97. In late March 2011, persons acting at the direction of the Defendants contacted
2 a close friend of Valdez and warned that the Defendants were watching Valdez “like a
3 hawk” and that disclosure of Valdez’s allegations could cost the Defendants more than \$300
4 million.

5 98. On information and belief, Defendants continued to prepare and timely submit
6 Attestation Of Risk Adjustment Data Information forms as required by CMS for the
7 relevant time periods but did not advise CMS of the information they had indicating they
8 had been overpaid due to significant percentages of the underlying medical records being
9 non-compliant with the ICD-9 forms submitted to CMS.

CAUSES OF ACTION

COUNT I: FALSE CLAIMS (31 U.S.C. § 3729)

(Against all Defendants)

13 99. Valdez realleges and hereby incorporates by reference every allegation set
14 forth in paragraphs 1 through 98 of this First Amended Complaint.

15 100. Defendants knowingly submitted inaccurate, incomplete, and misleading data
16 to the government in order to raise RAF scores and increase CMS payments.

17 101. Defendants knowingly submitted revised and supplemental data to CMS in
18 order to get additional CMS funds, knowing that the data submitted was inaccurate,
19 incomplete and, misleading because it contained only information that would raise RAF
20 scores and payments to Defendants, while Defendants did not advise the government of, or
21 delete, information that would lower payments to Defendants.

22 102. Defendants filled out and submitted to CMS false Attestations for the relevant
23 time periods, falsely representing that all information submitted to CMS was accurate,
24 complete, and truthful.

25 103. Through ongoing audits and medical chart reviews, Defendants continually
26 knew that they had received overpayments from CMS based on previously submitted ICD-
27 9 Codes that were not supported by the corresponding medical records, yet Defendants

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1 failed to notify CMS that they had received overpayments and failed to return any
2 overpayments.

3 104. Through the acts described above, the Defendants knowingly violated each of
4 the following subsections of the False Claims Act:

- 5 a. Knowingly presenting, or causing to be presented, a false or fraudulent
6 claim for payment or approval (31 U.S.C. § 3729(a)(1)(A));
- 7 b. Knowingly making, using, or causing to be made or used , a false record
8 or statement material to a false or fraudulent claim (31 U.S.C.
9 § 3729(a)(1)(B));
- 10 c. Conspiring to defraud the government by submitting false claims, false
11 statements, and failing to return overpayments (31 U.S.C.
12 § 3729(a)(1)(C)); and/or
- 13 d. Knowingly concealing or knowingly and improperly avoiding or
14 decreasing an obligation to pay or transmit money or property to the
15 Government (31 U.S.C. § 3729(a)(1)(G)).

16 105. The United States government was unaware of the falsity of these claims,
17 records and/or statements made by the Defendants and, in reliance on the accuracy thereof,
18 paid the Defendants for the claims.

19 106. Due to the Defendants' conduct, the United States has suffered substantial
20 monetary damages.

21 COUNT II: RETALIATORY DISCHARGE (31 U.S.C. § 3730(h))

22 (Against Defendants Aveta, MSO and Shinto)

23 107. Valdez realleges and hereby incorporates by reference every allegation set
24 forth in paragraphs 1 through 98 of this First Amended Complaint.

25 108. By terminating Valdez's employment after only eight months without cause or
26 warning, Defendants Aveta and MSO retaliated against him for repeatedly and lawfully
27 asking questions, marshaling evidence, and speaking out against the Defendants'
28 overbilling practices and other violations of law.

1 109. After he was terminated, Defendants refused to pay Valdez the severance he
2 was due under his employment agreement with MSO unless he signed an agreement
3 releasing claims against all Defendants and their affiliates and agreeing not to sue or make
4 negative comments about them, which Valdez refused to sign.

5 110. Due to the above-described conduct by Aveta, MSO and Shinto, Valdez has
6 suffered substantial damages.

PRAYER

8 WHEREFORE, Valdez prays that this Court enter judgment on behalf of the United
9 States and against the Defendants awarding:

- a. To the United States, damages in the amount of three (3) times the actual damages sustained by the United States as a result of the Defendants' violations of the False Claims Act;
- b. To the United States, civil penalties against the Defendants equal to \$11,000 for each violation of 31 U.S.C. § 3729;
- c. To Valdez, the maximum allowed pursuant to 31 U.S.C. § 3730(d);
- d. To Valdez, all expenses, fees and costs incurred in this action, including attorney's fees and costs;
- e. To Valdez, the maximum allowed pursuant to 31 U.S.C. § 3730(h), including special damages, litigation costs, and attorney's fees;
- f. To Valdez and the United States, prejudgment interest at the highest rate allowed by law; and\

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1 g. To Valdez and the United States, all other relief to which they may be entitled
2 and that the Court deems just and proper.

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4 Dated: July 21, 2014

BIENERT, MILLER & KATZMAN, PLC

6 By: /s/ Thomas H. Bienert, Jr. /s/

7 Thomas H. Bienert, Jr.
8 Attorneys for Plaintiff

9 REICH RADCLIFFE & KUTTLER LLP

10 Marc Reich
11 Attorneys for Plaintiff

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1 **DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL**

2 Pursuant to Rule 38 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure and Local Rule 38-1, the
3 Plaintiff in this action, by and through its counsel of record, hereby demands trial of this
4 cause by jury.

5 Dated: July 21, 2014

6 BIENERT, MILLER & KATZMAN, PLC

7 By:

8 */s/ Thomas H. Bienert, Jr. /s/*

9 Thomas H. Bienert, Jr.
10 Attorneys for Plaintiff

11 REICH RADCLIFFE & KUTTLER LLP
12 Marc Reich
13 Attorneys for Plaintiff

1
2 **CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**
3

4 I, Coleen Grogan, declare,
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6 That I am a citizen of the United States and am a resident or employed in Orange
7 County, California; that my business address is 903 Calle Amanecer, Suite 350, San
8 Clemente, California 92673; that I am over the age of 18 and not a party to the above-
9 entitled action.

10 That I am employed by a member of the United States District Court for the Central
11 District of California and at whose direction I caused service of: PLAINTIFF'S FIRST
12 AMENDED COMPLAINT PURSUANT TO THE FEDERAL FALSE CLAIMS ACT, 31
U.S.C. §§ 3729-3732 on the interested parties as follows:

13 **X BY ELECTRONIC MAIL:** by electronically filing the foregoing with the Clerk of
14 the District Court using its ECF System pursuant to the Electronic Case Filing provision of
15 the United States District Court General Order and the E-Government Act of 2002, which
16 electronically notifies said parties in this case:

17 Linda A Kontos
18 AUSA - Office of the US Attorney
19 USACAC.Civil@usdoj.gov

20 **X BY ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION** - I transmitted a PDF version of this
21 document by electronic mail to the party(s) identified below using the e-mail address(es)
22 indicated

23 Russell Hayman
24 RHayman@mwe.com'

25 Ankur Goel
26 agoel@mwe.com'

27 This certificate was executed on July 21, 2014, at San Clemente, California.
28

I certify under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

29 _____
30 /s/ *Coleen Grogan* /s/
31 Coleen Grogan